

Appl. No. : 10/713,845
Filed : November 14, 2003

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-62 were pending in this application prior to entry of the above-mentioned amendments. Claims 1-22 are herein cancelled. Claims 23, 26, 27, 29, 40, 44, 45, 48, 59 and 60 are herein amended and new Claims 63-65 are added. No new matter is added by these amendments. Accordingly, Claims 23-65 are now pending.

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly requested. Each of the Examiner's reasons for rejection is addressed below.

Amendments to the claims

Claims 23, 40 and 48 have been amended to clarify the language of the claims. Claim 23, as amended, recites, *inter alia*, "exposing the first photoresist film to radiation through a first mask reticle...exposing the second photoresist film to radiation through the first mask reticle." Claim 40, as amended, recites, *inter alia*, "forming an insulating layer having a thickness of less than about 100 nm over the conductive plug...and depositing metal within the opening to form the conductive contact." Claim 48, as amended, recites, *inter alia*, "using a first mask a second time to form a second via in a second layer over the first layer...wherein the second radiation exposure level is different than the first radiation exposure level." These amendments are fully supported by the application as originally filed ("the Application") at, for example, paragraphs [0026]-[0034].

Claims 26, 27, 44, 45, 59 and 60 have been amended to fix various typographical errors and/or to match follow-on recitations with their antecedents.

Claim 29 has been amended to recite, "wherein exposing the first photoresist film comprises employing a first radiation exposure level and exposing the second photoresist film comprises employing a second radiation exposure level, wherein the second radiation exposure level is lower than the first radiation exposure level." This amendment is fully supported by the Application at, for example, paragraphs [0026]-[0029].

New Claims 63-65 have been added. The new claims are fully supported by the application at, for example, paragraphs [0026]-[0031].

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Allowed claims

Applicants note with appreciation that Claims 61 and 62 are allowed.

§112 rejection

Claims 23-60 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. With respect to Claims 23 and 48, the Examiner alleges that it is unclear whether the first exposure level may be the same as the second exposure level. With respect to Claim 40, the Examiner alleges that the preamble of the claim is not commensurate in scope with the body of the claim. With respect to Claim 48, the Examiner alleges that the claim is written in a very confusing manner, and further alleges that it is unclear whether "the via holes are formed in different layers or may be formed in the same layer."

Applicants have amended the claims (see above) to address each of the Examiner's reasons for rejection. For example, Claim 23 has been amended to remove the wording "a first radiation exposure level" and "a second radiation exposure level" as unnecessary. Claim 40 has been amended such that the preamble ("A method of forming a conductive contact to a conductive plug") is commensurate with the body of the claim ("forming an insulating layer having a thickness of less than about 100 nm over the conductive plug...and depositing metal within the opening to form the conductive contact"). Claim 48 has been amended to clarify that "the second radiation exposure level is different than the first radiation exposure level."

Accordingly, in view of the clarifying amendments to the claims, Applicants respectfully request that the §112 rejection be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. If there is any further hindrance to allowance of the pending claims, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

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Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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